

## VISUAL LITERACY NOTES

### 2017 Kate Greenaway Medal shortlist

Title: **The Journey**  
Illustrator: **Francesca Sanna**  
Publisher: **Flying Eye**



### First look

- Share the book with all the shadowers. Take time to look closely at the pictures but do not spend too much time talking about them yet.
- Look through the book together again, this time discussing at all the images, decorations and other graphic details. Ask them to point out to each other anything that strikes them as interesting about the artwork in terms of colours, shapes, lines and spaces.
- You may like to look at the Amnesty International website to find the excellent downloadable materials to help explore *The Journey*.
- Chat in pairs or as a group about whether they enjoyed about the book. What did they like or dislike and why? Talk about all the visual aspects of the book i.e. end papers, font choices, title page and layout. How do these 'extras' contribute to the overall impact of the book?

### Look again

*What does the narrator know?*

The story is being told by one of the children so, if we only had the printed word, we can only know what the children know. For example, find these two pictures in the book:



What do the pictures tell us that the children do not know? Are there other things that the children can't tell us but the pictures do?

### Colours

At the opening of the story, the sea is black. Does it symbolise the encroaching fear that the family are experiencing? When you turn the page the black darkness of war is taking over, reaching across the city with claw-like hands. How has the loss of father been illustrated?

### Visual conventions

The conversation between the mother and her friend is happening in this picture. The usual way to show speech in a picture is to use a speech bubble. What is the friend saying?



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*Find this picture in the book.*

What thoughts are the children having as their mother shares a book with them? How can we tell?

The family's hopes and fears are overwhelming. How do the images reflect this?



Clue 1: When the two red bearded guards are looking for them, why are the guards in the pictures so much bigger than the family? Are they really that much bigger or is it the fear that is so huge?

Clue 2: When the little boat is on the sea, we see what is beneath the boat. Can you see things there that represent fears?

Right from the start of the book, starting with the picture on the front cover, the images demonstrate the confusion and complications of the family's situation. Once you have read the whole book a couple of times, see how many parts of the story are represented on the front cover.

### **Empathy**

Can we understand what the characters in this story must be feeling? It will depend on what we know whether when we have an emotional response to the book. One of the scariest bits is when the family get into a small boat. Thinking of them adrift on the sea is terrifying. Why do you think the people on the boat tell each other frightening stories? Are there any parts of the book that make you feel concerned for the family?

What is the significance of the page of birds at the end of the book?



### **Interpreting the texts**

It is always beneficial, when studying a book, to use tasks which require imaginative response to encourage students to engage fully with the text. The following suggestions may help the group of young readers to become engaged in the book.

### **Writing**

Imagine you have been told that you will be leaving home and can only take one small suitcase. What would you pack? Make a list.

Look at the pile of suitcases at the start of their journey. How many cases do they take on the boat?

Write a short description or a poem about how the members of the family felt at different stages of the story. You can make up your own starter lines but here are some if you can't think of anything:

1. My father has gone 2. We are going on a journey 3. The guards are scary 4. I can see land

### **Artwork**

The family travel in at least seven different ways. Fold a piece of A4 paper into four rectangular sections. Choose four ways of travelling and draw one of your chosen ways of travelling in each.

### **Research & IT**

Search CBBC News Round via a search engine to find appropriate videos for younger readers about children who have had to flee their own country because of war.

### **The Journey by Francesca Sanna: A Sequence of activities for Upper Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3**

It might be useful to have a visualiser or some kind of camera projection device to be able to share the images from the text with the pupils on a large scale, to allow for close reading of the images.

The book supports teachers to teach higher level reading and writing skills through a challenging and emotive text. The rich and evocative illustrations are the perfect stimulus for developing reader response by inviting reflections of complex and mature themes. The text offers a wealth of opportunities to explore in depth responses to the challenging issues and sensitive content in a framework that explore these themes whilst inspiring creative and authentic responses.

It is advisable to give careful consideration as to whether or not all members of your class have the emotional maturity to engage with this text in light of the sensitive nature of its focus. Teachers must also be mindful and sensitive to the prior experiences of their pupils and use this to inform the extent to which they deem it appropriate to explore the themes addressed. The book can be explored with children in Year 5 and above subject to the above caveats.

The activities detailed below stretch over five sessions and focus primarily on using the illustrations to stimulate reflection, discussion and creative responses. The sessions introduce readers to the family unit and the rupture that is created by the father's disappearance. If you wish to explore the plot further and in more depth, a five week teaching sequence with extended writing opportunities is available on CLPE's Power of Reading website. [www.clpe.org.uk](http://www.clpe.org.uk)

#### **Session 1:**

Present the children with a pair of glasses, ideally with a circular red frame like the glasses worn by the father in the story. Invite the children to speculate upon who the glasses might belong to and consider:

- Where they may have come from
- What the owner might have seen through the glasses
- How they might have been misplaced
- How this might affect the owner

Note the children's reflections and suggestions. Divide the children into discussion groups. Provide each group with the first page of the double page spread with the opening paragraph omitted. In their groups invite the children to consider:

- What they notice?
- What aspects of the illustration they like and are drawn to and why?
- What aspects of the illustration they dislike and why?
- What puzzles them and what questions the illustration prompts?
- What connections they make, what does the illustration remind them of? They might reference previous experiences, other books, film, animation or art as part of their reflections.
- How the illustrator uses colour and shapes and what impact this has on the reader.

Once they have discussed the first half of the illustration, provide each group with the second part of the illustration. Encourage the groups to extend their discussion to consider how the additional detail develops their initial impressions as well as considering the use of colour and shape.

- What effect does the dimension and ratio of the composition have?

- Where might the scene be set?
- Why might the illustrator have chosen to set the opening scene here? How might it be relevant to the story?
- What is each character doing? What does the body language and facial expression suggest and what might this tell us about each character?
- How is shadow used in the illustrations and what does it suggest?
- Invite them to note their discussions around the illustrations and then use these notes to inform a whole class discussion.

Read the opening part of the book. Discuss what the choice of words and phrases suggest about their lives before the change? Explore what aspects of the language indicate a sense of routine, stability and normality. Drawing on their responses to the illustration invite the children to speculate what the change may have been, what might have triggered it and what the consequences might be.

- How do the details in the illustration support these inferences?
- Invite the children to reflect on previous summer holidays and recall a fond memory of summer. Ask them to consider what three or four colours most effectively capture the mood and energy of this memory.
- Using their chosen palette, encourage them to draw their fondest memory or an image that best captures what summer means to them on A4 card.
- On the other side of the card invite them to draft a caption to accompany their memory to create a postcard memory.

## Session 2:

Provide each child with a piece of A3 black sugar paper and a copy of their drawing from session one. Ask them to cut the A4 piece of artwork into as many pieces as they choose and arrange and stick the pieces onto the black sugar paper in any way they choose. (Alternatively cut the artwork up in advance and return this to each child in an envelope). Discuss how it feels to have the image of their memory fragmented and altered in this way. Using black crayon or paint, invite them to cover as much or as little of their collage as they choose. Discuss and note how this makes them feel.

Share the next page of the book that features the image of destruction without the text and invite the children to respond. Note their responses. Discuss how the colour black is used and what effect this has. What might it symbolise or represent? Read the text accompanying this illustration.

## Session 3:

Read onto the next page and encourage response to and discussion of the text and illustration. Bring back the glasses from the first session and consider with the children the sentimental value of objects and what it can feel like to only have an object to remind you of a person? Discuss why the illustrator may have chosen the glasses specifically.

- What significance or symbolism can be drawn from this choice?
- What will have been viewed through the glasses over time? What will have been the last thing viewed through the glasses?

Drawing on the discussions and reflections, invite the children to form groups and in their groups create a freeze frame that captures what they deem would be a poignant memory for the father. Provide each group with a strip of paper and encourage them to draft a line that best captures the essence of the memory created. Collate the strips and as a class agree an order that can form the

basis of a collaborative poem. Encourage the children to use the freeze-frames and collaborative efforts to inspire their own compositions. Allow the children to use the frame below to help support their own poem or alternatively use the inspiration to write their own free verse.

#### Session 4:

Read the next page and share the illustration of the family in their embrace. Photocopy the illustration and draw two circles over the image to create a venn diagram to help frame and focus the discussion. Encourage the children to consider the similarities and differences between the two images of the family. What do the two family portraits suggest about the two different moments in the lives of this family? Explore this further with the children and ask the children to consider how the mother might be feeling at this point in the narrative; what are her concerns likely to be and how the sequence of events so far are likely to have affected her?

Encourage the children to consider the use of colour and shapes in the illustration and what affect this has. In what ways does the illustrator use the colour black, what affect does this have and what might it suggest? Explore the strong sense of foreboding that is created through the use of colour, shape and detail in the illustrations.

#### Session 5:

Read the next page. Discuss the text alongside responses to the illustration.

- Discuss the details of the illustration as well as the contrast in colour and shape.
- What might the choices made by the illustrator signify?
- How does this setting differ from the seaside setting in the opening of the story?
- What might be the symbolic significance of this contrast?
- Discuss the possible symbolic significance of the turbulence of the sea and erosion of the sands juxtaposed with the sturdy stability of the mountains.

Read on to the next page. Identify the animals and nature depicted. You may choose to provide the children with the opportunity to research where this place might be. Invite the children to consider how this vastly different landscape and climate is likely to affect what will already be a very large upheaval for the family. Take on the role of the mother and invite the children to represent the voice of the friend. In role facilitate a conversation to explore what options are available to the mother and her family and the challenges involved in staying or going. Invite the children to draw on the contributions made in the drama activity to write a letter in role as the friend offering advice on what they think the mother should do.

This sequence of activities was designed by CLPE for the Greenaway shortlist. To access more free resources from CLPE, visit: [www.clpe.org.uk/freeresources](http://www.clpe.org.uk/freeresources)

In depth teaching sequences for over 175 other high quality texts can be found at: [www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading](http://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading)

Further resources to support children's understanding of picturebooks for all ages and research on the importance of using picturebooks across the primary years can be found at: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures>



# THE JOURNEY

by Francesca Sanna  
Flying Eye Books

Shortlisted for the 2017 Kate Greenaway Medal  
and the Amnesty CILIP Honour

*'These timely and distinctive illustrations offer a deep and emotional introduction to the losses and experiences that immigrant families face'* – Judging panel



### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**Article 14: If we are frightened of being badly treated in our own country, we all have the right to run away to another country to be safe.**

### ABOUT THIS BOOK

The Journey tells the story of a family forced to flee their home to escape the turmoil of war. It's a harrowing journey but one the mother hopes will lead her and her two children to safety. A simple narrative and dramatic and meaningful graphics look at the danger, uncertainty and loss which underpins every refugee's story of survival.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states we all have the right to life, freedom and safety. No one has the right to hurt us and our governments have a duty to protect us. If we feel at risk, we have the right to go to another country and ask it to protect us. This is what it means to be a refugee and to seek asylum. Refugees are escaping and risk perilous journeys because they are in danger. It is why governments should do everything they can to keep families together, to look after children if they have lost their parents and to welcome refugees.

### HUMAN RIGHTS THEMES IN THIS STORY

Refugee rights; children's rights; right to life, freedom and safety; right to food, clothing, housing and healthcare; right to a family.

### QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE HUMAN RIGHTS

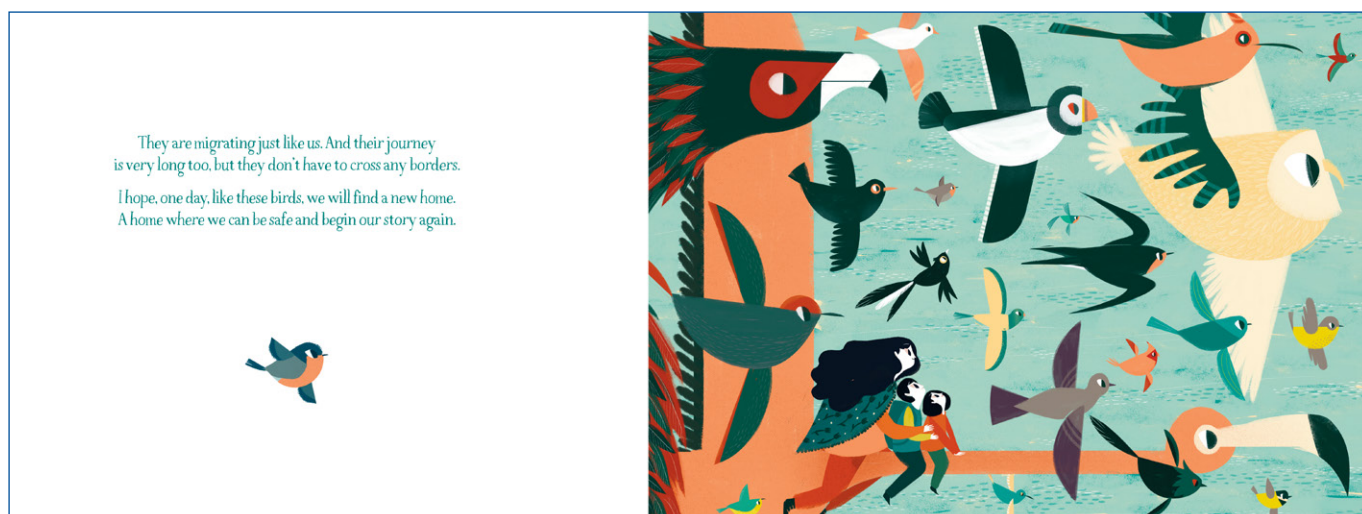
- Which images make you feel happy and sad?
- Is darkness good or bad in this story – or both?
- How do the use of colours propel this story – and its mood – forward?
- How do you feel about people going on journeys like this?
- The narrator notes that 'the farther we go... the more we leave behind.' What might the children miss about home?
- Why has the author drawn the family riding on the neck of a bird?
- Do you like the ending? How would you end it?

### ACTIVITY

Imagine you had to leave home in a hurry and you were only allowed to take one bag. Draw that bag and what you would pack in it.

### RESEARCH

Find out how many people in the world are refugees and where they are. Can you find these countries on a map?



The Journey's inspiration came when author and illustrator Francesca Sanna met two girls in a refugee centre in Italy. She then began interviewing more refugee families in Europe, and created this book as a tribute to their plight and strength.

## We are all born free and equal

The atrocities of World War II sparked a determination to protect the rights of all human beings, everywhere. On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The preamble says it must be shared, learned by children and be a part of all our lives.

For a simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights go to [www.amnesty.org.uk/udhr](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/udhr)

For more free educational resources from Amnesty International go to [www.amnesty.org.uk/education](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/education)



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